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Message Text

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FOLLOWING SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO SECDEF WASHDC, CNO WASHDC, CNM WASHDC, USCINCEUR, CINCUSNAVEUR, USDOCOSOUTH FROM ATHENS 23 SEP 74:

QUOTE S E C R E T ATHENS 6910

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS GR
SUBJ: GREEK REQUEST FOR NAVAL SHIPS

REF A. CHJUSMAGG 181525Z SEP 74 B. CHJUSMAGG 121500Z SEP 74 (NOTAL) C. CHJUSMAGG 201545Z SEP 74 (NOTAL) D. CHJUSMAGG 202030Z SEP 74 (NOTAL) E. ATHENS 6905 (NOTAL)

1. THE REQUEST BY THE CHIEF OF THE HELLENIC NAVY (REF A) FOR INSERVICE PATROL GUN BOATS, DESTROYERS AND DIESEL SUBMARINES, WITH DELIVERY ON AN EXPEDITED BASIS, MAKES SPECIFIC THE GENERALIZED REQUEST FOR USG EFFORTS TO
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STRENGTHEN THE HELLENIC NAVY AND AIR FORCE EARLIER MADE

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BY DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF TO THE CHIEF OF JUSMAGG, MAJOR GENRAL BURKE (REF B). DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER MAVROS HAS ADVISED THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE WILL BE RAISING THIS SUBJECT WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER WHEN THEY MEET IN NEW YORK ON SEPTEMBER 24 (REF E).

2. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS REQUEST SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SYMPATHETICALLY FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: (A) MG BURKE BELIEVES THAT EXPEDITIOUS SUPPLY OF THE ITEMS IN QUESTION WOULD FILL LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF THE HELLENIC NAVY AND THEREBY STRENGTHEN GREEK OVERALL DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY. THE HELLENIC NAVY'S NEED THEREFORE IS NOT COSMETIC AND THE VESSELS IN QUESTION CAN BE JUSTIFIED ON MILITARY GROUNDS. (B) THE HELLENIC ARMED SERVICES HAVE RECENTLY SUFFERED A SERIES OF SHARP REVERSES, AND THE CYPRUS CRISIS WAS A PROFOUND PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOW. THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE CURRENT GREEK MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE EVOLVING SECURITY POLICIES OF THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE INCREASED. OUR WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND SYMPATHETICALLY TO THE HELLENIC NAVY REQUEST WILL HELP ACHIEVE BOTH OBJECTIVES. (C) WHILE FOREIGN MINISTER MAVROS AND THE GREEK MILITARY LEADERSHIP HAVE SPOKEN OF MOVING TOWARD MILITARY PARITY WITH TURKEY, THEY ARE AWARE THAT TRUE PARITY IS BEYOND THEIR CAPABILITY. SUPLYING THE NAVAL CRAFT THAT HAVE BEEN REQUESTED WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT THEREFOE ENCOURAGE THE GREEKS TO ADPT ADVENTUROUS MILITARY POLICIES TOWARD TURKEY. ON THE CONTRARY, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD SHORE UP GREEK CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES AND THEREBY CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE OBJECTIVE AND LESS EMOTIONAL GREEK ATTITUDE. (D) THE PRESENT WEAKNESSES OF THE GREEK MILITARY, ESPECAILLY THE GREEK NAVY, TENDS TO BE A DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THE AEGEAN. ACCORDINGLY, STRENGTHENING THE HELLENIC NAVY WITH SELECTIVE ITEMS FOR WHICH THERE IS A DEMONSTRABLE NEED SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A LESS PRECARIOUS MILITARY EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AEGEAN. WHILE IN THE SHORT TERM GREECE IS SEEKING A MORE CREDIBLE DEFENSIVE POSTURE IN THE AEGEAN, IN THE LONGER TERM IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HELLENIC NAVY WOULD BE HELPFUL IN COUNTER-BALANCING SOVIET AND OTHER COMMUNIST NAVAL STRENGTH IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AS A WHOLE. (E) FINALLY, IT IS CLEARLY

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DESIRABLE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE TO FILL GREEK NEEDS OURSELVES RATHER THAN ENCOURAGE THEM TO GO ELSEWHERE. DESPITE RECENT DIFFERENCES OVER CYPRUS, WE HAVE RECEIVED EVERY INDICATION THAT THE HELLENIC ARMED SERVICES AND THE GREEK GOERNMENT PREFER TO USE AMERICAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT. WE SHOULD MAKE EVERY FEASIBLE EFFORT TO REINFORCE THIS PREFERENCE.

3. WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE ARGUMENTS THAT CAN BE ARRAYED

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AGAINST GIVING EXCEPTIONAL TREATMENT TO GREEK REQUESTS FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES AT THIS TIME. A FUNDMENTAL OBJECTION VOICED IS THAT GREECE SHOULD BE BE "REWARDED" FOLLOWING ITS THREAT TO WITHDRAW FROM NATO. THIS THEORETICAL OBJECTION QUITE FRANKLY SEEMS TO US UNCONVINCING. WHATEVER GREECE DOES TO IMPLEMENT ITS DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM NATO, AND SO FAR IT HAS NOT DONE MUCH, GREECE HAS EVERY INTENTION OF REMAINING WITHIN THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. THE QUESTION OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS DOES NOT ARISE. GREECE CONTINUES TO BE AN ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES AND BOLSTERING ITS DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES IS NO LESS IMPORTANT TODAY THEN IT WAS BEFORE. INDEED SINCE THE GREEK GOVERNMENT HAS YET TO DECIDE HOW--OR PERHAPS EVEN WHETHER--TO RESTRUCTURE ITS MILITARY COOPERATION WITH NATO AND THE UNITED STATES, THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR US TO DEMONSTRATE AS CONVINCINGLY AS POSSIBLE THE PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES DERIVED FROM CLOSE MILITARY ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES.

4. ANOTHER ARGUMENT THAT CAN BE ADDRESSED AGAINST SUCH ASSISTANCE IS THAT WE MIGHT BE HELPING TO ARM GREECE FOR A POTENTIAL CONFLICT WITH TURKEY. WHILE THIS IS OBVIOUSLY A VERY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION, WE MUST POINT OUT OUR VIEW THAT SUCH A POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT EXISTS IN ANY CASE AND THAT THE FURNISHING OF THIS NAVAL ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT INCREASE THE CHANCES OF SUCH A CONFLICT AND MIGHT EVEN DIMINISH THEM SOMEWHAT BY TENDING TO DISCOURAGE THE TURKS FROM ANY PROVOCATIVE ACTION IN THE AEGEAN BASED ON SUBSTANTIAL TURKISH NAVAL SUPERIORITY. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE GREEKS WOULD INITIATE HOSTILITIES BUT WOULD MERELY RESPOND TO TURKISH PROVOCATION. THUS, AT THIS STAGE, OUR FURNISHING THIS NAVAL ASSISTANCE TO GREECE WOULD NOT INCREASE THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCH A CONFLICT.

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5. AT THE SAME TIME IMPORTANT SECURITY BENEFITS ACCRUE TO THE UNITED STATES BY MAKING THESE VESSELS AVAILABLE. WE STRENGTHEN GREECE'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY AND HELP TO REPAIR OUR OWN BADLY DAMAGED RELATIONS WITH THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP IN THIS COUNTRY. ON BALANCE, THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE REQUEST BE SYMPATHETICALLY RECEIVED AND CONSIDERED AND, IF POSSIBLE, ACTED UPON FAVORABLY. KUBISCH UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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